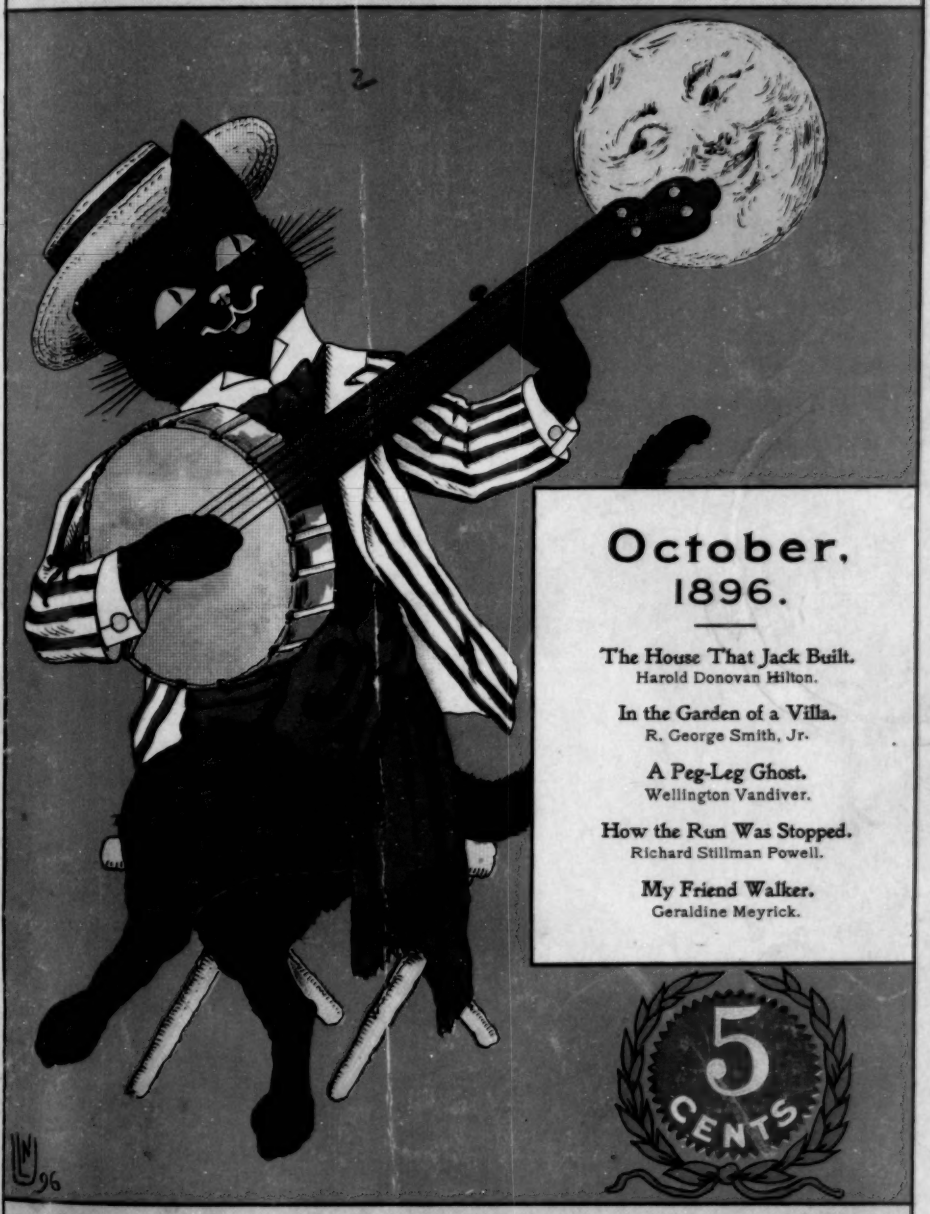
The Black Cat



October, 1896.

The House That Jack Built.
Harold Donovan Hilton.

In the Garden of a Villa.
R. George Smith, Jr.

A Peg-Leg Ghost.
Wellington Vandiver.

How the Run Was Stopped.
Richard Stillman Powell.

My Friend Walker.
Geraldine Meyrick.

5 CENTS

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO. 144 HIGH ST. BOSTON, MASS.

№13 Copyright, 1896 by The Shortstory Publishing Co.

Sozodont

FOR THE

TEETH AND BREATH.

The Complete and Perfect Dentifrice, Liquid and Powder in one or the Powder separately.

Proprietors: **HALL & RUCKEL** New York.

The only Antiseptic Soap at once highly agreeable and effective in protecting the skin from disease. Price, 25 cents.

Sozoderma

FOR THE

TOILET AND BATH.

W. M. S.

THE SHADES OF NIGHT WERE FALLING FAST

When Longfellow wrote the above words, he did not have in mind the

HARTSHORN SHADE ROLLERS

They never fail. Always stay where put, and keep the shade where you wish. Used for years. No year passes without improvements. Ask for the "Improved Hartshorn," having holders that prevent the shade tearing from roller. No tacks.

See that Stewart Hartshorn's autograph is on the label.

STEWART HARTSHORN'S SELF-ACTING SHADE ROLLERS

Beware of Imitations NOTICE AUTOGRAPH OF Stewart Hartshorn ON LABEL ARE ALL THE GENUINE STEWART HARTSHORN

ROWELL, N.Y.

REGINA MUSIC BOX

PLAYS 1,000 TUNES.

The invalid rapidly recovers health under the spell of its enchanting music.

PLAYS YOUR OWN SELECTION OF MUSIC.

Excels any music box ever made in brilliancy and volume of tone. Cannot get out of order like the delicate Swiss music box, and the tune sheets, being of metal, are indestructible. Handsomely cased and an ornament to any room. Runs from 10 to 30 minutes with each winding.

The New Orchestral Regina.

The largest music box ever made. Arranged with money drop attachment for hotels and public places. Boxes from $14 to $200. Sold by all music dealers.

SEND FOR HANDSOME ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE.

REGINA MUSIC BOX CO., Rahway, N. J.

The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

No. 13. OCTOBER, 1896. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

IMPORTANT.—The entire contents of this magazine are covered by copyright and publishers everywhere are cautioned against reproducing any of the stories, either wholly or in part.

The House That Jack Built.

BY HAROLD DONOVAN HILTON.

IN Western Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash, is a certain town, famous as the home of a senior United States senator, famous as the home of a contemporary of fourteen presidents, but perhaps even more widely known through the fame of its race-track, which holds the light harness records of the world.

It is not of the river, nor of the race-course, however, nor of the silver-tongued orator, nor the senior senator, nor yet particularly of the town that I write, but of The House That Jack Built.

At the intersection of Sixth and Chestnut Streets it stands, an odd and heavy-looking old stone house, fully furnished though untenanted, slowly falling to decay within two squares of the busiest corner of the town.

The grounds are of ample dimensions, occupying quite one fourth of the block in which the house stands, and are enclosed by an ornamentally sawed wooden fence, now rotting slowly away. Upon the lawn great forest trees stand in primeval dignity, and among them a once magnificent, shell-paved drive winds up to the massive portal.

Often, as I passed it, I wondered that the owner of so valuable

Copyright, 1896, by the Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

a property should allow it to deteriorate. Indeed, from the day I saw it first, the place possessed an unaccountable interest for me, and so strong did this interest become, that for no other reason I changed my boarding-house to the square diagonally opposite. Here my room was by no means as comfortable as the one I had left; the fare was worse, while the price remained the same. Yet I left perfectly satisfactory lodgings in order to be near this house, though I had never known an occupant of it, or even so much as the architect.

I have neglected to say that at this time I was a newcomer in the town, where I had received an appointment as night telegrapher, and that it was upon my first trip to the office that I had noticed the house and christened it with the title already given. After that, every morning as I would come to my room during the young hours I would pass this house, often stopping to gaze wonderingly at its shadowy windows and neglected grounds.

Finally, as I grew familiar with my new boarding-place, I asked in turn each of my fellow-boarders to tell me what he knew of the house. But though all had noted its gloomy appearance, their information, as well as that of our landlord, was as meager as my own.

In the afternoon, after sleeping the greater part of the day, I would usually take a walk, and in whatever direction I started I would invariably return to my room by way of The House That Jack Built.

As time wore on, however, I began to realize the absurdity of these proceedings and to avoid that corner, though to do so I was obliged to go two blocks off the direct route to the office.

It was when, with the idea of removing myself from this strange influence, I commenced to look about for another room, that an incident occurred that brought this resolve to a head.

One day in early spring I went to my work as usual, but had been on duty only about four hours when I received a message from my brother, whom I had not seen for several years, saying that he would arrive at one o'clock.

Upon explaining the circumstances to the dispatcher, I was granted a leave of absence for the rest of the night, and as soon as the man sent from the extra list of the city office had arrived,

I gave him the necessary instructions and started briskly for my room.

The wholly unexpected message had driven every other subject from my mind, and I walked rapidly up Sixth Street, unconscious of my surroundings or the fact that I had attempted a short cut, until I was brought to a halt by a sudden spasm of dread, and found myself inside the fence of the old house on the corner of Chestnut Street.

How long I stood there, one foot slightly raised and as slightly in advance of the other, as if to take a step, my arms swung, one back and the other forward, as though I had been frozen stiff while walking, I shall never know. During that time I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I felt nothing but terror that destroyed almost the wish to escape. And I was within twenty feet of one of the most frequented thoroughfares of a city of thirty thousand people.

When I did get out of the grounds, it was by walking straight across the lawn, at the edge of which I paused, looking back in vain for any shape that would account for my terror. Then I turned, placed my hands upon the low fence and vaulted over. The minute that my feet touched the sidewalk every vestige of weakness left me, and I hurried across to my room, prepared it, and went with all haste to the station.

Two days after the events just narrated, my brother ended his brief visit, and I moved back to my former room, where, from thence forward, I was completely removed from the region of the house, excepting as I passed within a square of it in my journeys to and from the office. But if I was removed from its vicinity, I was not free from its strange influence. With the advancing summer my afternoon walks became more frequent, and often, while pacing slowly along, intent upon matters of an entirely different nature, I would glance up, to find myself in front of The House That Jack Built.

Indeed, this happened so constantly that, though the moment before I could not have told upon what street I was, when the instant arrived I knew, without looking up, that I stood opposite the massive old doorway.

One day I was frightened to find myself with my hands upon the fence and almost in the act of leaping over at the very spot

where I had made my former entrance to the grounds. And though I finally got away without crossing the fence, frequently after this I felt the same temptation.

Soon, no matter what my occupation, the undercurrent of my mind was ever busy with The House That Jack Built. From being amused I became alarmed. Madness seemed staring me in the face. Already I was a monomaniac, and I knew it.

Finally I applied for an exchange to another division of the service, hoping to find peace of mind among new scenes. In the course of a few weeks my application was favorably reported on, and I was informed that at the end of the month I should be transferred to the Western Division.

On the last night of my stay in town I was, of course, off duty, and while putting the finishing touches to my packing, I was seized by a longing to see once more The House That Jack Built. Resistance was useless. In the end, I took up my hat and hurried out, in the hall stumbling over a small bull's-eye lantern, the toy of one of the children.

To reach the house, I was obliged to cross the main portion of the city from south to north, and taking a car, I was soon at Eagle Street, where I alighted and walked the one remaining square. Very cautiously I crept down Sixth Street to where an evergreen hedge separates the lawn from the next house. There I turned and tiptoed back to Chestnut Street and to the boundary on that side. I had met no one, and not even a trolley-car had passed.

Returning to my favorite place in front of the house, I stood for a few minutes gazing steadily at its faint outlines and forcing my lips to form the words "I am free."

Suddenly, to my amazement, with a peculiar gliding motion, utterly unlike my usual go-as-you-please gait, I began to approach the corner, stopped at the identical place where I had once crossed the fence, and where, again, I had found myself with my hands placed to vault it.

As I stood there, it seemed impossible that I should leave the town without once more crossing that fence.

Then I ran. Not in fear, but in pursuance of a fixed and definite purpose.

My pace did not slacken until I had reached my room, where I secured my revolver and shoved it into the side pocket of my coat, noticing, as I did so, that it was just twenty minutes of twelve. As I came downstairs, I remembered the dark lantern. I shook it to see that it was full, lighted it, reversed the slide, and putting it under my coat, left the house.

This time I did not take a car, but walked the half mile to the charmed spot, where, stopping only long enough to be sure that I was not observed, I vaulted over the fence into the grounds.

I had taken ten or twelve steps, and was congratulating myself that my previous fright and worry had been without cause, when I stopped, seized again with a sudden terror. I was in the exact position and upon the very spot of my first adventure.

Summoning all my will power, I walked toward the house, and with each step the torture became more acute. The suffering was not physical. I did not tremble, my hair did not rise, my eyes did not start from their sockets. Yet so great was the mental strain, that each muscle was tense as steel. For days afterward I was sore and stiff, as though I had engaged in violent exercise.

In a few minutes I had reached the house and walked slowly around it in search of a window that would give easy access to the interior. I was fortunate enough to find one that yielded to my fingers without obliging me to resort to my only jimmy, a huge jack-knife.

The house is built in the shape of a St. George's cross, and in the angle furthest from both streets is the window I had opened. I stood for a few minutes to note the result of my temerity, half expecting to be felled by a blow coming from nowhere, and delivered by nothing.

The blow did not fall. I swung in through the window, closed the inner shutters, and felt carefully around the walls, making not the slightest noise. Then, shutting one door, I took the lantern from under my coat, and reversed the slide.

As I turned up the wick, and my eyes became accustomed to the light, I was astonished at the size of the room. I had supposed, from my journey round the walls, that it was large, but I was not prepared for a hall of fifty by thirty feet.

This was evidently the dining-room, for in the center was a huge carved mahogany table, covered with a yellowed cloth and some pieces of silver dinner service.

The walls and ceiling of the room were of paneled oak, and from an elaborately carved centerpiece depended a beautiful chandelier. As I glanced from this last to the floor, which showed brilliantly polished through the dust, my hand sought my pocket and brought forth my watch. The lantern almost dropped from my grasp as I saw that the time was six-twenty. There was a subdued murmur, and as the light fell full upon the dial, I saw that the hands were moving forward at a ruinous rate. I slipped the watch back to its pocket, and crossed to a door diagonally opposite the window by which I had entered.

Here I again reversed the slide of the lantern. The door opened easily, and I entered the room, assuring myself, as before, that all doors and window were closed. Then I allowed the light to shine in what evidently was the billiard-room. Here everything was complete.

The two tables must at one time have been a delight to the players, for I rolled a ball against the cushions, and found them still full of life. This room was furnished in the same style as the dining-room, with the exception of sundry leather couches and cozy window seats.

The next two apartments were drawing-rooms, and through them I came out into a large hall with a superb staircase. The first landing was surmounted by an arched panel, bearing the letters "S. M." in monogram on a diamond-shaped ground.

Ascending, I entered several bedchambers, everywhere finding a dignified magnificence that evinced lavish expenditure combined with rare judgment.

At the end of the corridor I went downstairs again, to emerge into a small entry that must have faced Chestnut Street. There was a door on either side, and I went through the one to the right, reentering the billiard-room.

Pausing to take my bearings, I selected the door which would not take me again into the dining-room or the drawing-rooms. Here I went through the usual process of darkening my lantern before entering the room, and of closing the door when I had passed inside.

But now, as I made the circuit of the walls, feeling carefully before me, I encountered neither chairs nor tables, couches nor bric-a-brac, to interrupt my progress. Nor were there any windows nor any door other than that which had given me entrance. This apartment seemed to be circular in shape, and, according to the plan of the house which had been forming in my mind, was in the very heart of the cross.

As I turned up the light, I found myself in a room so black that similes fail. A darkness that seemed to live and breathe filled every nook.

Looking closely, I saw that the walls were thickly padded and draped with black leather, but without suggestion of the mad-house cell. This drapery of leather was the richest and most artistic decorative effect I had yet seen in this wonderful house.

In the middle of the room was a card-table, airy, delicate, graceful, and black. The top was covered with padded black leather. I moved over to the table and gave it a push; I might better have pushed at the wall. I lifted, and by extreme exertion raised one corner from the floor; then I knew that my surmise was correct — the table was of solid ebony.

I looked up. Far, far above I could see a cloudy glow, and a little to one side a star. I was at the bottom of a well. From the center of the skylight hung a long, slender rod. My eyes followed it downward and rested upon the chandelier. Even the shades and globes were of black lacquer.

I glanced at the floor. The velvet carpet was black, and scattered upon it under the table were playing cards, all black, both back and face, save where the latter was relieved by the spots or the designs of the court cards.

I stooped to pick up one of the cards, and as I did so the first sound I had heard since entering the house broke the silence. A low, mellow, flute-like note, all alone it swelled for an instant, then another and a third in sweetest harmony, all in one awful breath to become a demoniacal roar that could have only found voice in the throat of the horrible living blackness which pervaded the room.

At the first note I paused to listen, and as the others joined, my recklessness failed me. With an awful shriek, I bolted

through a door into a narrow passage leading into the hall. The noise had ceased, but its reverberation shuddered through me, as I dashed up the stairway and into the first room that presented, where I dropped upon the floor exhausted.

I lay there but a few minutes, nor did the time seem longer to me. Then I rose, cursing my cowardice; and as I stood erect, the light from the lantern, of which I had kept fast hold, fell upon the bed, and, glancing around, I perceived that I was again in a black room. It was a very simple bedchamber, furnished throughout in black. My eyes wandered again to the bed. The mildewed drapery was thrown back, and had a tumbled appearance, as if its last occupant had not slept well.

As I gazed, the last remnant of my courage oozed away. In vain I strove to master the paralysis stealing over my brain — my soul seemed to gasp — there was a quick and sickening convulsion in my head. After that, I do not know what happened until I picked myself up from a cramped posture under the window through which I had gained entrance to the house. Indeed, I can hardly remember how I reached my home; though I recollect that, upon recovering my senses, I did not wait even to search for my dark lantern or my revolver — this last a valuable affair that had somehow fallen from my pocket during my adventure in the house.

When I entered my room, the little clock on the mantel marked the hour of four. Too exhausted to undress, I flung myself upon my bed, and did not awake from a sound sleep until two o'clock in the afternoon.

That evening, as I crossed the river on the five o'clock train, I looked down stream and understood the sounds that I had heard while in the card-room. The *Janie Rae*, the one small steamer that plies the river, had come to her moorings during the night.

This and the incident of my watch are the only events of this strange series which have ever been fully explained to me. The running down of the watch was caused by the breaking of the escapement. I still carry it, and it does me good service.

. . . . . .

Nearly two years elapsed before I again visited the scene of my uncanny adventure.

The occasion of my visit was the annual race meeting, always an important event in sporting circles. This year, the announcement that Nancy Hanks was to trot against her record of 2.06¼ had attracted sporting men and horse fanciers from all over the United States, and I had obtained leave to attend with a crowd of other employees. That afternoon, of course, we spent at the race-track, seeing several exciting races, not the least of which was the establishment of a world's trotting record of 2.04. Enthusiasm ran high, and later, in the crowded hotels, strangers brought together for the first time, almost from the four corners of the earth, swapped sporting stories, and compared notes on the day's event like so many college chums.

The hotels were overflowing, and soon after reaching my own, I withdrew from the office to the billiard-room. Among a party engaged in playing pool I recognized, to my amazement, an uncle of mine whom neither I nor any of my family had seen since I was a child.

Upon seeing me, he withdrew from the game, and, after vainly endeavoring to find seats, proposed a walk. As we left the hotel, he stopped a moment, and, looking around him, said: "Well, let's see, I used to be familiar with every inch of this town, but now I need to take my bearings.

"Oh, yes, this way — let's go this way," he added, starting towards Ohio Street. Then, as he launched out on various reminiscences, we drifted along for some time, hardly conscious of our surroundings, until suddenly we found ourselves on Chestnut Street, directly in front of The House That Jack Built.

"By the way, uncle," I said, stopping short, "do you know anything about that house?"

"Well, I should say so," he answered, with a start of surprise. "I know more about it than any man living."

Then, wheeling about, and resting one elbow on the dilapidated fence, he began: —

"Thirty years ago, there was no more promising young man in this town than Sam MacDonald. From boyhood he had shown himself a lad of promise, and as his parents were in comfortable circumstances, they had given him the benefit of all the educational advantages that the town then afforded.

"Upon leaving the high school, Sam entered the employ of one of the railroads, in the freight department, where, by application and address, he soon won the esteem of all the officials. His kindly, intelligent manner won him friends in all classes. Everybody knew Sam, and everybody liked him.

"Of course such a promising, likable fellow was a general favorite with the girls, and Sam could have married almost any of them. At twenty-six, he did marry the belle of the town, amid general rejoicing, and the company signified its approval by giving him a clerkship in the auditing department, with an increased salary.

"In his new work, young MacDonald rapidly rose to the position of confidential clerk, and was cited as next in line of promotion to the assistant auditorship.

"Two children, a boy and a girl, soon came to brighten his home life, and for a few years everything seemed to point to a happy and prosperous career — "

Here my uncle paused a moment, his face clouded with what was evidently a saddening recollection. Then he continued gravely: —

"In a single night everything was changed. One evening before a general pay day, the auditor received a package containing a large amount of money. As the banks were closed, the package was placed in the office safe. In the morning, when the safe was unlocked, the package was missing. Yet the combination showed no sign of having been tampered with.

"Well, you can imagine the outcome. The combination was known to only three men — the auditor, his assistant, and the confidential clerk. The two former were rich, pillars of their respective churches, and suspicion naturally fell upon MacDonald."

"Then he was suspected?" I asked, as my uncle once more broke off his narrative for a moment.

"Worse than that; although there was not the slightest evidence against him, he was arrested and thrown into jail. Two days later he was released, as they had utterly failed to make out any case against him. But those two days had cost MacDonald everything. He came out, to find his home wrecked and his

friends turned against him. Even his wife, the one person out of all the world who should have stood by him, left him, and refused to see him when he called at her father's house.

"Still, in spite of everything, he made a hard struggle to live down the unmerited disgrace, investing the few hundred dollars that he had laid by in a small hardware business.

"In less than a year he was a bankrupt."

"And his wife," I inquired. "Did she never go back to him?"

My uncle shook his head. "The day after the sheriff had levied execution on his stock, MacDonald met her face to face. He again protested his innocence, and for a last time begged that she would come back to him.

"But she turned away without a word. At that, he grasped her by the arm.

"'Listen, Carrie,' he said; 'I have lived an honest life, and not one of you would stand by me. Now I may as well have the game as the name. I will build the grandest house in the city, and, so help me God, there shall not be one honest stone in it!'

"He was as good as his word. That night he went to the one man who had stuck to him. From him he borrowed twenty-five dollars, and, with this as his only capital, he left the town the next day, bent on carrying out his terrible scheme.

"From the very first day his luck was phenomenal. Faro banks, roulette wheels, card games, all yielded him a golden harvest, and for the next two years, though he almost never visited his native city, stories of his fabulous gains drifted back to it from Denver, Chicago, New York, New Orleans, San Francisco.

"The man who had failed in everything honest could not lose money in any gambling device. One day he returned and began the erection of this very house. A famous New York architect was employed to draw up the plans for it, while the most skilled decorators were imported from all over this country and abroad. Paintings from the studios of world-famous artists were bought at enormous sums to hang upon its walls. China in special patterns was fired for him at German and French potteries. The carpets and hangings were all priceless antiques from Persia and

India, or rugs that had been woven specially for him. It was indeed the grandest house not only in the town, but in the whole West! — and of the hundreds of thousands expended upon it, not one penny was honestly earned.

"When at length it was finished, MacDonald took up his residence there with a whole army of servants, and proceeded to open his house to a few select companions of the races and gambling table. Of all his old friends, only one ever stepped inside his door, and that was the man who had lent him the twenty-five dollars on which he had built his fortune. He stood by him to the last, for he believed in MacDonald's innocence, and knew that his only dissipation was the daily round of card playing that he now found necessary to existence.

"Even when his own friends went back on him, this one man stuck to him. But not for long. The unnatural strain of MacDonald's life could not last. One evening, when engaged with half a dozen others in a game of cards, he suddenly clutched at his heart with both hands, and then fell back unconscious.

"An hour later he was dead.

"With his last breath, he gasped to the friend who stood by his bedside: —

"'Before God, I am innocent! Prove me so to the people of this town, and everything I leave behind is yours.'

"Then, sinking back, he murmured: —

"'Bury me in these grounds'; and pointing to the large safe that stood at the foot of the bed, he whispered to me —"

"To you!" I cried in amazement.

"Yes, my boy, I was MacDonald's friend. And when his will was opened, it was found that he had left all his property, including this house, to me. But I was not to gain possession until his innocence should be proved."

"Was it ever proved?" I exclaimed.

"No! From that day to this, that terrible mystery has haunted me. For years I gave time, money, everything, to solve it. It is as great a mystery to me as ever. And if there is a soul in this town who believes the man who lies buried there is not guilty, I have yet to find him.

"Understand, it wasn't Sam's fortune I wanted. But, some-

how, I never could believe him guilty. And the fact that I couldn't clear his memory almost drove me mad. So, after losing my own business, friends, and money, in my fruitless attempt to prove his innocence, I drifted to California. Then I vowed that I would never return; but somehow, the other day, something drew me back again to the old place."

So deeply impressed was I with my uncle's relation of this strange death-bed scene, that all the way back I kept silent concerning my own experience at this house, which I determined to reserve until later. But the next morning at the breakfast table we were greeted by news of another death-bed scene that, for a time, put everything else out of my mind. For at the very hour when we stood before The House That Jack Built, the real thief, through whose crimes Sam MacDonald had lost everything, died, confessing his guilt. Now, after twenty years, it was known that it was the auditor of the railroad, the former pillar of the community, who had stolen the bonds to save himself from ruin threatened by unlucky speculations. Thus Sam MacDonald's innocence was finally proved, and the man who had stood by him and believed in him in the face of everything at last came in for his fortune.

I have recorded the above occurrences just as they happened. As to the nature of the mysterious influence that guided me for the first and the last time to the house which, as my uncle's adopted son, I shall some day inherit, the reader must judge for himself.

In the Garden of a Villa.

BY R. GEORGE SMITH, JR.

"WAKE up — wake up, you lazy fellow, and sing a how-d'y-do to the sun. He is already above La Falterona," chirped Signora Nina to her husband. "You are growing so lazy that no one would ever take you for a lark. Only those fast owls and nightingales, after carousing all night, indulge in such indolent habits, but you, a lark — it is really too shameful."

"Up? Why, I'm up, my dear little wife, and I bet that I shall beat you up to the edge of that high branch," peeped lazy Pippo.

This bit of scolding and happy reply may have disturbed the slumbers of the birds in the immediate neighborhood, less active and ambitious than these larks, but not so much as the brilliant song which burst from the ruffled throat of the offending one, in a matinal welcome to the glorious glow of light crowning the mountain's height. For Pippo had won the wager, being the first to light upon a topmost branch of the tree under which they had a cozy and comfortable nest, in the beautiful garden of the Villa of the Duc di Laniella, near Florence.

"Whew! That made me pretty dry, Nina," chirped Pippo, as, his song ended, he tilted, panting, on the swaying branch. "Come, let us wet our whistles with a nice dew cocktail."

"Your first thought in the morning and the last at night is of something to drink. What will become of you! I expect to see you fall off your perch some day. Still, if you must drink, it is best that you should do so in good company; so I'll drink with you this time, if you will promise to fetch me a nice fat worm for breakfast. Come, let's take our bath first; then, the cocktails."

"No, Nina, here are two big ones already made. We'll have these and find two more after the dip, to take the chill off, you know."

"Pippo, you are going to the bad fast. Don't you know that dew cocktails are quite insidious?"

"Insidious! That's the hen of it! Anything with cocktail to it is 'insidious.' Why, dew is the most innocent thing one can drink. It comes right out of the sky."

"That is all right, if you would drink the dew on the flowers and grass in the garden, but you must always fly away somewhere to sip it off a mint leaf."

"You are very unsophisticated yet, my dear. That is not a dew cocktail. That is a *crême de menthe*. The best cocktails are found in a rye-field. Last summer, down at the seashore,—Spezia, you know,—I was chirping with a gull who had been all over the world, and he said the finest cocktail he ever tasted was a dew-drop taken from a railroad up in the air, over in New York, and it was called a Manhattan cocktail. He said that one morning he took three or four before breakfast and flew out over the bay, but he couldn't catch a fish. The water kept going around and around until he thought it all a big whirlpool. Then his wings drooped and he fell,—luckily on a boat, where he was picked up and locked up in a dark hole."

"Oh! He was a 'gull,' wasn't he? You did not go around with him much, did you, Pippo?"

"Come, Nina, here goes. Here is a long life and a merry one."

Down their thirsty little gullets ran the popular cocktails, and then they blinked at each other, gave a little chirp, and flew away to a shaded brook for a morning splash.

. . . . . .

The first year of wedded life was nearly ended, and this pair still twittered continual assurances of devotion and sang pretty compliments to each other. They teased each other in all manner of ways, just for the fun of making up. In the morning, one might have seen them flying together over the beauteous Val d'Arno, resting on David's head, then on the Palazzo Vecchio's grim turret, winging slowly their flight through the cool Loggiato of the Uffizi, over the Arno again to the Boboli Gardens to call on some aristocratic lark-ladies, and to gossip about everybody from the royal Humbert and his spouse to the wicked nightingales who had invaded the Boboli and were bringing disrepute upon

this haughty swelldom, by luring there, in the dead of night, all the gay young birds of Florence. Then, after a delicate spider-leg and an insinuating grape, served in an outstretched hand of some lovely Apollo, they would dart away to the garden of the Villa, up on the hill, near San Miniato.

This morning Pippo brought home, as a token of his love, a big fat worm, which Nina laid on a fresh olive-leaf, with some crumbs from the Duchess' window at the Villa. The fresh morning air, the cocktails, and the bath gave them a keen appreciation of this dainty *déjeuner*, and Nina, in a most joyous mood, peeped about this thing and that, until Pippo could not refrain from exclaiming: —

"Good heavens, Nina, how can you chirp so long with your inside so full of worm? If you don't stop, you'll be sick. Of course, I am glad we were born birds instead of people, especially larks. We are the swagger set — way up, you know. We sing superbly. We dine well. We wear plain feathers, but we hop and fly with an aristocratic grace, and the only plebeian thing we do is to get up early in the morning, and I am trying to break down that bit of traditional nonsense. And oh, do you know, the gull told me that, in America, a man who went around having a good time — drinking cocktails, and staying in bed late in the morning and staying up late at night, eating fine suppers and doing all such nice things — is called a 'bird,' and is said to 'fly high.' Funny, isn't it?"

"I wish you had never met that gull. He has put bad ideas into your head. By the bye, Pippo, the Duchess at the Villa is an American, and is a very good and beautiful woman, too. We are deeply in her debt for the delicious crumbs we have to eat. I often see her sleeping when I go to her window in the morning. She sleeps all alone, Pippo. Do you suppose that she and the Duc do not love each other? Oh, how unhappy I should be if you were not in the nest with me every night when it is dark and silent! Why, you are actually asleep when I am chattering love to you."

"Excuse me, dearest. It was cruel of me to go to sleep, but that worm was so hearty, and you woke me so early, and you twittered so sweetly, that I was lulled into a little doze. There are a dozen kisses, and forgive me."

"Did you ever fly after the Duc, Pippo? Do you know where he goes? The Duchess is so kind, so beautiful, I hope she is not unhappy."

"Yes; I have followed him a few times. It is great sport."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"He is a 'bird' and 'flies high,' as the gull would say, and I hear lots about him at the club, which wouldn't interest you."

"Poor Duchess! No love in her nest. I'm afraid it is feathered with bank-notes instead;" and Nina's bright eyes softened as she nestled a moment close to her mate.

That same afternoon Nina made a wonderful discovery. After a long flight over a lovely country, she alighted for a moment's rest upon a long wire which was stretched between two high poles. To her amazement, a delicious thrill went through her little body, causing her to peep most hilariously. Soon she became conscious of certain impressions not unlike those conveyed by human speech; out of the strange mixture of clicks and buzzes she could even make out whole sentences.

"The new ballet at Gaitie great success — Wild excitement on the Bourse —Q and Z fallen two points — Gilda won the Grand Prix —His Holiness is slightly improved — Mme. la Comtesse X gave a dinner in honor of the Duc di Laniella —"

What could it all mean? With her head whirling with this rush of words, she flew to her home in the garden of the Villa to divulge the discovery of this wonderful and entertaining perch to Pippo, to be still further excited by his patronizing explanation that this was an electrical device by which people communicated with each other, and whose wires encircled the whole world.

Indeed, so delighted and fascinated was Nina with these electrical perches, once foolishly shunned in her preference for trees and statues, that now, when her husband was spending an hour or two on the window-sills and porticoes of a fashionable club in the Palazzo Pucci, chirping "sport" with the gay young larks who frequented those select quarters, she was very sure to be found tilting on the tell-tale telegraph-wire.

The exhaustless stock of gossip which she gathered therefrom created no end of amusement and hilarity, and she soon found herself the most important personage in the Boboli's smart set.

Notwithstanding the daily indulgence in this pastime, and the social demands made upon her, Nina did not neglect her early duties; and every morning she made her errand to the Villa for the crumbs at the Duchess' window, but at such an early hour that she invariably found the Duchess asleep. And although the Duchess was a lovely picture so,— her beautiful face against the pillow, her hair a golden halo, and a fair white arm framing them both in a graceful oval,— Nina longed to see her awake. At last, her tiny brain evolved an idea which would have done Pippo credit.

One morning, when she and Pippo had started out to sing their daily dawn song, she feigned a weariness, and cunningly directing their flight to the Duchess' window, begged Pippo to alight on its sill and sing their morning song from there.

So, with their backs to the window and faces to the east, they sang their song, he piping with more than his wonted brilliancy and joyousness, and then away he flew, leaving Nina alone to watch the result of her little strategy.

What sleep would not be dispelled at such melody! As the last glad note floated into her room, the Duchess stirred languidly, opened her eyes and smiled her thanks to the lark on her window-sill. The next moment the smile faded; she gazed thoughtfully at the cupids on the ceiling, and then breathed a deep sigh. She threw off the silken coverlet, and rising wearily, stood, for a moment, before the mirror and lifted the masses of her golden hair, shimmering with the morning sunshine.

Nina's heart stood still in her admiration of such wondrous beauty — beauty almost excelling that of the Venus di Medici which she had once seen in the Tribuna of the Uffizi.

Wrapping about her a fleecy white gown all soft laces and ribbons, the Duchess sank among the Turkish cushions, on a divan opposite her glass, and talked to herself in a low, sweet tone: —

"I do not think the Duchess di Laniella is any better looking than was Nelly Nevins," said the Duchess to her reflected self. "In fact, she does not look the same person. I have heard it said that I had such laughing eyes, but I can scarcely believe it, my lids droop so languidly now. And then, I remember I always showed my teeth when I smiled, but, somehow, the Duchess

always smiles with her lips closed. I had a good healthy color — red cheeks — but, look at me now, pale as a nun. I left the laughing eyes, the red cheeks, and the happy smiles in New York, I suppose, with many other things. Ah! what a wretched bargain you made, Nelly Nevins, when you gave all those things for seven hollow letters! Listen — D-u-c-h-e-s-s. How I used to scribble them all over a blank piece of paper! Why don't you laugh any more, Nelly Nevins? I have not heard a good jolly laugh from you in a year. However, those seven letters have made some one happy. Poor mother, she has grown fully two inches taller since my marriage. What motherly pride and delight she feels when she speaks of 'my daughter, the Duchess di Laniella.' Ah, you happy little bird, how you mock me with your freedom and joyous song! Happiness — happiness — am I never to know it again? Is my young life to pass away without loving or being loved? I must love — my heart is so full of love for some one, I feel I shall suffocate, die — unless — unless I can find some one — a peasant — a singer — a king — oh, some one — some one — "

She buried her face in a cushion, breaking out into such pitiful, convulsive sobs as made Nina's little heart ache. Yet what could she do, except peep a few pitying notes and fly away to tell Pippo of the sorrow she had found in the beautiful Villa?

Pippo listened attentively to her recital, and sympathetically remarked: —

"Yes, the gull said it was an awful sight to see the shiploads of mothers leave New York, leading their daughters to the European Slave Market; and many are sold, too, he said. What a lot that fellow knew! All comes from traveling, I suppose. If I ever meet him again, I think I shall ask him to take me on an extended trip, — to America, perhaps."

"Pippo," moaned Nina, thinking of the deserted Duchess, "I should die."

. . . . . .

Somehow, after the peep into my lady's chamber and into her heart's secret, Nina seemed depressed. She grew more pensive, more sensitive; her notes became more feeble and plaintive, and she often spoke of the Duchess.

Pippo did not relish the change, and could not understand why she grew so sad while he was feeling jollier day by day, and the world was all so rosy-hued. She was no more to him the joyous lark he had courted and wedded. He felt disappointed. The sunny, golden color was fading into a dirty white, he thought; but it did not occur to him that he was doing the bleaching.

It was about this time that Nina observed that the daily routine was becoming less regular. Pippo was continually finding more occasion for quenching his thirst, excusing himself to his wife on the ground that the air was so chilly, the worms so thin and unpalatable, and so on. Then it was rumored that he frequented the restaurant at the Piazzale Galileo, not far from where the big David overlooks the fair city, where he would hop on an unoccupied table, and, with a waggish air, sip a few spilled drops of chartreuse or maraschino. He also patronized his club more frequently; had become chummy with some gay young nightingales who keep shocking hours; and, alas! occasionally it was far into the dark night when he fell into the nest, without a word of love, and forgetting to spread his warm wing over his wife.

All this, however, was changed one bright morning, when, with joyous peepings, Nina woke Pippo and showed him two little eggs in the bottom of the nest. Pippo chirped his delight and, after many caresses, flew away to the Duchess' window to fetch a morsel to his dear little wife.

He was happy, she was happy, and Pippo said that even the Duchess looked happy this morning. Could she have known, too, and was glad — or — had she found some one to love —

During the period of setting, many of the lady larks from the Boboli called to present their congratulations, and to keep Signora Nina in touch with the latest scandal and gossip.

It was whispered in low twitters that a young and good-looking American who lived in Paris was frequently seen with the Duchess, and that she had such bright rosy cheeks, and such a fetching smile, showing the prettiest row of pearls, and then her eyes laughed so and said such inexpressible things! But then, aristocratic larks are abominable gossips! Probably he was her brother, or a cousin from home.

During the setting and the early days of the baby lark — only

one had lived — Pippo was a most devoted husband, and many times a day brought his wife and the little one the daintiest and most nourishing food he could find, and all the sunshine of the honeymoon seemed to have returned in the garden of the Villa.

When it was considered safe to leave the baby lark alone for a little while, Pippo, anxious that his wife should have some change and recreation, decided to take her to see a sport for which he had recently developed a fondness.

So, one morning, they flew together over the beautiful country until they came to a peasant's garden.

What a chirping and twittering, cackling and crowing! The bushes and trees were filled with excited birds of many varieties and classes, all, with extended wings, endeavoring to keep an equilibrium, piping, chirping, chattering, twittering, singing, and screeching, while the walls were crowded with hens, chickens, and roosters, all cackling and crowing in hilarious excitement. But to all Nina's bewildered questions Pippo made no answer except the injunction to watch the two gamecocks on the ground.

There, in a clear space, were two big roosters, flying and jumping at each other, picking at each other's eyes, plucking at each other's beautiful feathers now bedrabbled with rooster blood.

Nina's heart sickened; she grew faint, and begged to be taken away to the peace of her nest.

"What was it all about?" she chirped feebly.

"A cock-fight," enthusiastically exclaimed Pippo. "It is great sport, isn't it? Every bird in Florence is here. It is an old, old pastime revived and again becoming popular. Quite the rage everywhere, the gull said."

"That horrid gull knows everything that is evil," said Nina, with unconcealed disgust.

Oh, what a mighty noise! The crowing, and cackling, and chirping!

"The favorite has won!" screeched Pippo, flapping his wings with delight. "What sport there will be at the café in the Piazzale Galileo this afternoon and at the club to-night! You'll excuse me for to-night, won't you, dear?"

Pippo left Nina early in the afternoon that day and found his way hurriedly to his favorite haunts. A dark cloud hovered over

Nina's little heart again for the first time in many weeks. The horrible sight she had seen in the morning had sickened her. For hours she stayed awake, waiting anxiously and apprehensively for Pippo, but finally her eyes blinked themselves into sleep. When she awoke at break of day she was still alone with her baby. The little one must be fed, so she started to find a seed or a little worm; but the ground was dry and no worms were crawling about. During her search, she overheard a couple of common birds chattering, and, at the mention of her name, she stopped and listened.

"That Signora Nina, over there in the other end of this yard, will have to come off of her perch one of these days," chirped one.

"It will do her good, the puffed-up aristocrat," answered the other.

"I saw her hubby over in the Boboli last night, skylarking with the sweetest little nightingale you ever saw. They cooed on Venus' toe for an hour or so, and she was trying to make him sing like a nightingale, but he was so tipsy he couldn't half sing, and then he would peep most hilariously."

Poor Nina hastened back to her nest to sob. Oh, how her heart ached now!

"This must be what the Duchess felt when she buried her face in the cushion and sobbed so hard. I'll go to her window now and get a crumb for baby, and perhaps the Duchess in smiles will cheer me some."

The Duchess' face, however, wore no smiles, nor did her eyes twinkle, neither were there roses blooming on her cheeks; but she wore such an expression as Nina had never seen, except in a picture of a beautiful woman at the foot of a cross, one morning when she was in the Pitti Gallery. She was pacing the room to and fro, with her hands clasped and the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Her heart must be bleeding like mine," thought Nina.

She took a crumb in her mouth and flew back to the nest, where she found Pippo in a lifeless, drunken stupor, unable to see or hear her. "Where's the baby, Pippo?" screeched Nina in an agonizing note. "Pippo, Pippo, wake up and tell me where my darling is!"

No answer came from him, but a friendly neighbor told her the dreadful truth. While she was gone, her baby had tried to fly up to the first branch; but its little wings were too weak, and it lay on the ground dead.

Nina's head whirled, and she had hardly strength to control her wings. In her terrible trouble she turned to Pippo, but it was many minutes before she could rouse him. When he did awake, the terrible news sobered him instantly; he put his wing over his grief-stricken wife, and they sobbed together. Finally, when their grief had spent itself, he flew to the Boboli to inform the lark ladies of Nina's affliction, in order that they might offer their condolences. That errand accomplished, he hurried to the club to tell his friends. There he was persuaded to take a few drinks, and to linger longer than he had intended. Then he flew to tell some friends he might chance to meet at the Piazzale Galileo, where he also imbibed.

In the meantime, Nina became lonesome, and resorted to the telegraph-wire for distraction.

"Frank Chesterfield was killed by the Duc di Laniella in a duel at five this morning."

No sooner had Nina heard these words than she opened her wings and hurried home to ask Pippo who Frank Chesterfield was.

She waited hours for him, but he did not come, and again frightened by the lonesomeness of her nest, she hurried to the Duchess' window.

The Duchess must have fallen asleep or fainted, for she lay on the floor, near the divan, with face upturned, her white arms extended, her lips slightly parted, showing the pretty teeth so seldom seen — a fair, lovely woman.

Nina tried to wake her by peeping a few notes, but the Duchess did not seem to hear them. Then, growing braver, she flew through the open window, over to the Duchess, and kissed her on the lips. They were white and cold. She kissed her on the cheeks and on the hands. They, too, were cold — the Duchess was dead!

Suddenly the message which she had heard that morning flashed upon her.

"The Duc had killed her — no, he would not fight with a brother, nor, probably, with a cousin. Ah! the Duchess had loved, then. What more affliction can fall upon my poor broken heart? I must find Pippo. I still have him to love."

Back she hastily flew to the nest, only to find it still deserted. All the long, weary hours she waited, and at the end of the sleepless night she was still alone.

The next day, about noontime, she could bear the anxiety no longer, and darted away towards the club in the Via Pucci to inquire of his chums. None of them were around the windows and porticoes, however, and she hastened to the haunt in the Piazzale Galileo. There, too, she found none of them, but as she was very weary, she rested near a table where two men were lunching.

Said one: "These larks are the most delicious I have ever tasted. They have a rare, peculiar flavor of wine or liquor. How were they prepared, do you suppose?"

"Well, I killed two birds with one stone, so to speak. I suggested to the proprietor, the other day, to kill some of these larks which have been hanging about here considerably of late, and serve them up to me in good style. Thereby we rid ourselves of a nuisance, and delight our palates with a delicious morsel. Good, don't you think?"

The trees, and tables, and houses, and horses and carriages whirled around and around. She flew, she knew not where. Not to the sunlight, for she could not sing her little note. Not to the Boboli, for she could not chatter. Not to her nest, — no, no, not there! She wanted to die, but did not know how.

A Peg-Leg Ghost.

BY WELLINGTON VANDIVER.

I WAS raised among the plantations of Southern Alabama, had an old black mammy, and was imbued with all the superstitions of my foster-mother. And though I've lived to have many of them knocked out of me, there are some that have worked in deeper than the skin. There was an old "cunjah" (conjure) nigger on my father's plantation when I was a lad, and I believed just as firmly in his miraculous powers as I now trust in the efficacy of a recently decided case. Why, I've seen him do things that would make your hair stand on end, and that no book of philosophy I've ever read could account for.

Every darkey within ten miles of that place would have suffered death before arousing the enmity of that old "cunjah" doctor, and no young buck or maid ever began a courting affair without first procuring a love charm from old Cato.

I left the place and grew up to manhood, and had almost forgotten all about conjuring and such trash, when an incident in the trial of a criminal case recalled it all again very vividly.

I was called on to defend a splendid specimen of the negro race for killing his wife. He was a Hercules in bronze, and had lived happily with a quadroon wife until he had the misfortune to lose his leg in falling from the roof of a house,—he being a carpenter by trade. After this his wife seemed to have lost affection for him; she allowed the attentions of other men, and worked him into a frenzy with her flirtations. He remonstrated, she continued; he threatened, she replied with counter threats; and one day, when fully convinced of her infidelity to him, he came to town, purchased a pistol, announced his intention to kill her, hobbled a mile with the loaded pistol openly in his hand, and reaching home, followed by a curious crowd, he deliberately walked

up to his wife, put the pistol against her bosom, and shot her five times; then stumped away, leaving her dead, with her clothing burning.

Well, he sent for me to come to the jail and arrange about his defense. When I reached his cell he related about what I have told you, and I frankly told him I saw but little chance to prevent his being hung. Not a single minute did that darkey wait before breaking out in a loud horse-laugh.

"O Lawd, colonel," said he, "dar ain't a bit o' danger o' dat."

"The blazes, there ain't!" said I. "What's goin' to keep a jury of good and lawful men from stretchin' that yaller neck o' yours, I would like to know. Why, niggah! there ain't enough lawyers in Alabama to save you!"

"Why, colonel," said he, "I've got a cunjah charm on me, made by old Cato Feels, that's a sartin 'ventive o' death; you just go 'long and make your poration an' your 'jections, an' I'll come out all right."

It was no use talking to the fellow, and so I prepared the best defense I could under the circumstances.

Harry, my client, eyed the jury closely during the trial, and once when I happened to be disconcerted at a sudden artful move of the prosecution, he leaned over and whispered to me: —

"It's all right, colonel; I got cunjah stuff for six o' dem jurymen, and I'd get plum clear ef I could have got 'nuff for de odder six. You jes rar an' pitch; dey *can't* hang me!"

Well, I covered more "space and high reason," did more wind work, talked longer, and said less in that case than ever before in my life, and during the whole time the nigger never took his eyes off the six jurymen, nor did he cease to mutter and work his fingers.

The judge gave a terribly bloody, vindictive charge, and when the jury retired I felt it would be a matter of but a few hours with my client's neck.

Greatly to my astonishment, the jury didn't come back the first day, nor on the next, and it was whispered over town that six of the panel were for acquittal!

You could have knocked me down with a feather, and it took six drinks of whisky to arouse me to the situation. The jury

after four days came back, and sentenced him to the State farm for six years!

But I haven't got to the strangest part of the story yet. The negro gave me a deed to his little home, a mile from the town, as a fee; there were about two acres of land, a fine well of water, and a comfortable cabin on it.

I tried to rent the cabin, but couldn't get a darkey to occupy it for love nor money, — they all said it was haunted. In the meantime, Harry went to the State penitentiary, and, after arriving there, he wrote me that I'd have to get some conjure doctor to "obeah" — that is, remove the spell from the house, or no negro would stay on the place.

I rented it to a Northern colored preacher, with an educated wife, and he moved out in three days; said it was too noisy at night. My next tenant was a furnace hand, with six children, and he stayed only one night; said there were too many colored women standing around the cabin at night to suit him.

The neighbors wouldn't draw water from the well after dusk. They claimed that Harry's wife came to the well and helped 'em, and that when they lifted the bucket there was always a small piece of burnt clothing on top of the water in the bucket. They even showed a lot of burnt rags to prove it.

Finally I got mad and had the cabin torn down, and every vestige of the timber burnt up, and I built two new and modern cottages about one hundred yards west of the former location, and quite near a public street. But all my tenants in the new houses remained but a few days, and then "folded up their tents like the Arab."

Well, I was at my wits' end. About this time I received another letter from my client in the penitentiary, asking if the place had been "obeaed," and urging that I employ old Cato Feels to fix it so the ghosts wouldn't walk there. That came like an inspiration, and I sent a nigger fifty miles with a horse and buggy to fetch the old rascal. He arrived three days later, — but he wouldn't put foot on the place until midnight on the first night the moon began to wane.

I went there with him on the night selected, and the mayor, two drummers, and a Universalist preacher accompanied me.

You see, the Universalist was just one of those fellows who was always looking into the curious, and came along anyhow.

The house had been situated on top of a little plateau about seventy-five yards square, and the soil there was a slaty white clay mixed with sand, was dead level, and clean of grass and rubbish.

The old darkey had on a red wool blanket, which he wore Mexican-Poncho fashion, a queer kettle-looking iron hat, and was bare-footed and bare-legged. He made us all stand at least ten yards away from him, and charged us particularly not to come close to him while the charm was working.

He squatted down on the ground, and for about fifteen minutes he chanted or crooned the most outlandish gibberish I ever heard. It seemed to be a sort of crude poetry, with the refrain of:—

"Halum, skalum zaglum illiah,
Pollion Rollion ipsum killiah."

Where in thunder he got this dog Latin, or what it means, I can't answer; I only know it sounded mighty solemn.

After awhile he arose, and taking a short, black, thick wand from under his blanket, he walked ten steps backwards, and stooping over, he began to draw, upside down, on the ground, the familiar diagram that the children used to use in playing the old out-door game, "hop-scotch."

The fact is, I had never thought of what geometric figures there were in that old hop-scotch game. First, you know, there is a parallelogram, then, on top of that a square, then on this follow four right-angled triangles, and lastly, an arch.

In each corner of this diagram he placed small dolls made of the resin of the pine tree, figures fashioned rudely like a woman, and stooping over them he blew his breath on them, and all at once each of those puppets broke out into flame as quickly as a sky-rocket, and continued burning as long as we stayed.

Around all this he drew a large circle, still walking backward, and mumbling in an undertone in a way to make your flesh crawl; the fact is, he reminded me of old Horse-Leg Jones, at a back-woods prayer-meeting, except that old Horse-Leg had a different way of breathing through his nose.

Well, I got so interested that I couldn't stay away from near

the old sorcerer, and inadvertently I stepped into the ring old Cato had drawn; immediately I felt a hot streak run down my leg, heard the horse-laugh of my client Harry break out exactly as it had in the jail, and old Cato fell to the ground as if lightning-struck.

We poured cold water on the old fellow, and when he got so that he could talk, he bitterly upbraided me for breaking the charm, saying that the spell would now work backwards.

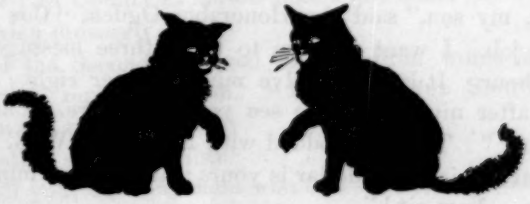
And I'm willing to be branded as a monumental Ananias all over America, if every night you can't hear at that spot the familiar hobble of the fellow that I know to be safe in the penitentiary walls; you can hear his laugh, and you can see a track of rings as round as a dollar, that no rain will erase, and punctuated with the dot and carry, the dent of the wooden leg and the flat foot of Harry, running around that spot.

It may rain floods, but the next day there is the same old peg-leg track, and every night from the street can be heard that same horse-laugh, that I'd swear to among a thousand voices.

In the hop-scotch ring there has grown up a red flower, strange in these parts, but which the florists pronounce an African tiger-lily, and by which the sharp outline of the ring is as well preserved as if a gardener had carefully planted them.

Recently I had a letter from the warden of the penitentiary, saying that every evening just at sundown Harry dropped into a cataleptic sleep, from which no power could awaken him until the next day at dawn.

People may sneer at conjuring as much as they like. I know the facts, and I know that night after night Harry's old home is haunted by a live ghost.



How the Run Was Stopped.

BY RICHARD STILLMAN POWELL.

HE Honorable Ogden propped the telegram against his wine glass, and re-read it between mouthfuls of frozen pudding. The Honorable Ogden's full title was Ogden Lapwell Kendall, President; and thus it appeared on the paper of three banks situated in as many cities of Colorado and Utah, — three banks which, in this month of July of the Year of Panic, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety-three, were the means of keeping the Honorable Ogden awake o' nights, and of introducing gray hairs into that gentleman's dark, albeit scanty, locks. The telegram before him ran thus: —

"Copper Dip, Col., July 15. Ogden Kendall, The Albany, Denver. Run coming to-morrow. Must have eighteen thousand coin or currency by noon. Gordon reaches you midnight. Arrange special train. Wheeler."

The Honorable Ogden refolded the yellow sheet and placed it in his pocket. Then he sipped his coffee reflectively, dipped his fingers carefully into the cut-glass bowl, selected a cigar from his case, accepted the lighted match proffered by the attentive waiter, and arose at length, with his course of action decided upon.

At the hotel office he ordered a messenger sent to his room, and when that youth arrived, three notes were lying ready for him on the desk. At their side lay also a bright silver dollar.

"Now, my son," said the Honorable Ogden, "this is not an all-night job. I want answers to those three messages here in just one hour. It is now twelve minutes after eight; at twelve minutes after nine I want to see you back here. Can you see that dollar?" The boy nodded with a grin. "Well, at twelve minutes after nine that dollar is yours; at thirteen minutes after it is mine. Now git!"

Three hours later a hall boy tapped at the door and brought in a card.

"'Mr. Stephen Gordon?' Show him up," said the Honorable Ogden.

In a moment the cashier of the First National Bank of Copper Dip entered. He was rather a small man, whose twinkling eyes swept comprehensively around the room as he shook hands with the host and took the proffered chair. The Honorable Ogden drew a small table bearing bottles and glasses toward the cashier, and then took a seat within comfortable distance. "Now," he said, "how did it happen?"

Gordon lighted a cigar. "Lippenstein," he answered succinctly.

The Honorable Ogden nodded. "I was afraid of him. I told Wheeler it was bad policy to push him last spring."

It was Gordon's turn to nod. Then he continued: —

"He started the rumor this morning that we were going to close the doors. Luckily the report didn't get around till after two o'clock. If it had, we should be broke now. Down at the Yard they took to it at once. It isn't necessary to remind you that our depositors are three fifths railway men. The ranchers cut a small figure. The town deposits represent about a fifth. To-morrow morning they'll be waiting at the door when we open up. We've got enough to keep agoing until noon. The ranchers can't hear the rumor until morning; they'll begin to flock in at noon. We've got to have the cash there by twelve o'clock, or it will be all up."

"Did Wheeler try Gillam?"

"Yes; Gillam refused. If we go, it will be nuts for them. Half the deposits withdrawn to-morrow will go to them the next day."

"The Hill County at Salida closed this noon," said the Honorable Ogden musingly.

"And the Second National at Carrollton won't last through to-morrow," replied Gordon. "I got it from Smith; he came down on the train with me."

The other sighed audibly.

"I tell you, Gordon, there won't be six banks standing in Den-

ver a month from now; I know it! And whether the Farmers' and Traders' will weather it, I can't tell; but I'll make a fight for it. I'm all right in Salt Lake; over there they don't know that there *is* a panic. But here —" he stopped and smoked awhile in silence. "Well, we can pull through at Copper Dip."

"Thank God!" said the cashier fervently.

"I don't like your coming over. It will look bad to-morrow not to see you there. Why didn't Wheeler send some one else?"

"There was no one else."

"What was the matter with Upham?"

The cashier grunted.

"Pshaw, Gordon, you don't do him credit," the other continued. "He's a bit wild, but he's wide awake. He'd have done this job all right. Never mind. I'll tell you what I've done. Beecham, of the Mountain National, will have ten thousand in coin for me at nine o'clock. I'll take the rest from the Farmers'. Whipple will have a special ready at Burnham at 9.30. It would make too much talk if it left from the Union Depot. You will have right of way, and ought to get to Copper Dip at 12.15 without trouble. Two men will go with you armed. I will telegraph Wheeler when you start. You had better wire him from Elkhorn, and again from Creswell. Now let me have the figures and go to bed. I'll give orders to have you called at 7.30. Good night."

The rain was falling in torrents the next day when a hack, drawn by steaming horses, dashed up to the station platform at Burnham, and Gordon, accompanied by the Honorable Ogden and two liquor-scented deputy sheriffs, alighted. On the outward track a locomotive attached to two baggage cars stood hissing and snorting. Quickly the bags of coin were transferred from the hack to the second car; the Honorable Ogden gave his parting instructions in a low voice to Gordon; and with one loud jangle of its bell, the locomotive sprang away. Gordon seated himself on the one chair in the car and looked at his watch. It was just 9.30. The two guards found seats on inverted boxes, and swapped plugs. The wheels pounded the rails, and the wild screech of the locomotive seemed incessant. Against the windows

the rain beat violently, until the landscape without looked only a blur of gray.

At a little station on the top of the foot-hills they stopped while a second locomotive ran down and was coupled ahead of the first. Then they were off again. But now the speed was less; ahead the two engines thumped and hammered at the incline together, and their breathing reminded Gordon of some asthmatic old woman struggling upstairs. At a little after ten Elkhorn was reached, and here, while the helper engine was being uncoupled, Gordon ran to the telegrapher's room and sent his first despatch to Copper Dip. On the pass the rain seemed rather to increase than diminish, and the occasional stunted cedars bent their sturdy bodies before the blasts that swept over the mountains. It was down grade now, and the car rocked and swayed around the curves until standing was an impossibility. On the car front the cinders beat like hail-stones, and conversation resolved into a series of signs and facial contortions expressive of satisfaction at the speed or disgust at the weather. Presently, a long whistle announced the approach to Creswell. Gordon consulted his watch; it showed three minutes after eleven. He held it up that the sheriffs might see. They nodded their heads in approval.

"Seventy-eight miles in ninety-five minutes!" one shouted above the din.

"Slippery tracks — good time!" Gordon returned; and the train slowed up with a series of jerks before a water tank. Here, as at Elkhorn, a despatch was sent off to Copper Dip. As Gordon came out of the station he saw a track walker in conversation with the engineer, who, leaning out of the cab window, appeared to be examining the road ahead. Gordon thought there was something of anxiety in the half-averted face, and for the first time since leaving Denver he looked at the road-bed. His gaze traveled up the track ahead until it was lost in the cut beyond the bridge, and a look of apprehension crept into his eyes. He looked upward. In the east, over the peaks, a lighter space in the monotonous gray presaged a break in the clouds, but the rain still fell. A short shriek from the engine hurried him to the car, and as he closed the door behind him, he heard above the noise of the train the roar of the swollen stream as it dashed under the little bridge.

At the teller's window in the First National Bank at Copper Dip, the Vice-President imperturbably smoked, and closed depositors' accounts in smiling good nature. From the window in front of him, back to the door, down the marble steps and far into the street stretched the unbroken, whispering, shuffling line of depositors. It was drizzling outside, and greatcoats and umbrellas lined the pavement and overflowed onto the car tracks, seriously interfering with the progress of the one-horsed cars, and calling into requisition the services of the greater part of Copper Dip's police force. At ten o'clock, when the heavy oaken doors of the bank had been thrown open, the line was formed and waiting. Ever since it had grown in length and restlessness, until now, at twelve, any lingering doubt as to the fate of the First National was dispelled. The bank was going. Every one said so; and saying it, all guarded their places in the line jealously, and prayed that the assets would hold out until their turn at the brass-framed window. There were all sorts there; widows seeking their mites — some of which were of very respectable proportions; storekeepers, blue-coated railway men, ranchers, and stock men. Of the latter there were few, and what were there held places in the far end of the line. The railway men were in the majority, and seemed to fear less for the safety of their money than the others, possibly because they held fortunate positions in the van. As each depositor reached the window his book was received by the Vice-President with a polite word of greeting, or a smiling remark on the weather. Somehow, no mention of a "run" was made. Comparisons were made with unusual care. The two book-keepers busied themselves over the great ledgers, as though runs were of daily occurrence. "How will you have it?" the Vice-President invariably asked. When the depositor requested bills, the Vice-President rejoiced; when coin was wanted, the Vice-President stifled a sigh. Bills require to be counted with great care; from the top, from the bottom, twice, sometimes. All this devours time, and time was what the Vice-President strove to lose. To pay in coin is but the work of a moment; hence the Vice-President's rejoicing and despair.

In the open drawer beside him, the Vice-President's gold watch lay face upwards; on the counter lay pad and pencil; and as

each deposit was withdrawn, a few lightning strokes of the pencil told the Vice-President the amount remaining in the bank. As yet there was no need for uneasiness; the figures still showed large, and the time was but a quarter after ten. At half-past ten the first telegram from Gordon was thrust through the window, and the Vice-President stopped and, slitting the envelope neatly with his knife, took out the despatch, read it unconcernedly, and handed it to Dick Upham, the assistant book-keeper, who posted it at the door. Those who could do so without losing their places, read it eagerly and passed its message down the line.

"Elkhorn, Col., July 16, 10.15. Special arrived Elkhorn 10.12 with eighteen thousand coin. Reach Copper Dip 12.15. Gordon."

Despite the interest the telegram aroused, its result was not all that the Vice-President had hoped for. A handful left the line; some seemed to regret their action immediately afterwards, and fell in again at the end; others went home. The general opinion was that the train would arrive too late to save the bank.

One occurrence brought a smile to the anxious faces of those inside the bank. A tall stockman, wearing "chaps" and carrying his quirt, reached the head of the line, and his unaccustomed gaze fell on the piles of gold and silver coin heaped up at the Vice-President's elbow. Without a moment of hesitation he dropped out of his place, and pocketing his book turned disgustedly away. "Bust be damned!" he was heard to murmur. "This bank's all right."

At a few minutes after eleven the second telegram arrived and was posted beside the other. It only announced the arrival of the special at Creswell, and was received by the crowd without enthusiasm. This time no one yielded his place. At twelve the Vice-President nibbled a chicken sandwich and drank a glass of milk brought in from a neighboring restaurant, and then lighted a fresh cigar. He glanced at his watch for the thousandth time and, turning, nodded to Upham, who laid down his pen and, stepping into a back room, donned mackintosh and soft hat and left the building by the side door. A walk of a block took him to a stable where an express wagon, ready harnessed to a pair of restless bays, stood awaiting his arrival. Into this he clambered and

the driver, touching the pair with the whip, guided the galloping horses down the long, mud-covered street, through the drizzling rain, to the station.

In the despatcher's room Upham dropped into a chair and looked inquiringly at the only occupant. The latter shook his head.

"Haven't heard from it since it left Creswell," he said.

Upham selected a promising-looking cigar from his case and handed it to the despatcher, who accepted it with his right hand while motioning to Deland to keep off the line with his other. Then Upham lighted a second cigar for himself and stowed his feet on a convenient desk. Outside a light engine dashed recklessly by and its ascending steam-cloud shut out the landscape. The instruments inside the room ticked monotonously on and Upham stared impatiently at the clock. It said 12.13. He listened, straining his ears to catch the sound of the long whistle of the special as it crossed the bridge a mile outside of town. All was silence save for an engine that puffed on the side track under the window.

Suddenly the despatcher gave an exclamation, and thudded the inoffensive instrument for a second, then paused. The "repeat" came.

"Dick," called the despatcher, reading the words as they fell from the sounder, "Oxford's talking; listen: 'Special stalled by washout two miles east of here; wrecking train on the way from Creswell; Gordon will bring money by wagon; track will be clear at four; notify First National!'"

"Wagon!" cried Upham; "Oxford's twenty-eight miles from here, and all the wagons in Colorado can't get the money here before dark!"

"The bank's gone, that's sure," replied the despatcher. Upham smoked savagely and made no answer. Then suddenly his face lightened, and, hurling his cigar to the floor, he shot from the room, slamming the door to behind him, and reached the platform.

"Where's the train?" asked the driver anxiously.

"In a ditch thirty miles up the road!"

Upham jumped to the seat and seized the reins. "Now hold on, or you'll be spilled out!" he shouted, and bringing the whip

down across the steaming flanks of the horses, he braced his feet, and the wagon lurched and swung away up the street.

. . . . . .

At the teller's window the Vice-President glanced despairingly at the watch. It was a quarter after twelve. The end of the line was nowhere in sight, but the end of the bank's resources stared him in the face. The last figures on the pad at his side represented the balance, and those figures were terribly few. He listened between each tick of his watch for the long whistle of the expected train. Only the murmuring of the crowd and the clang of a passing car bell came to his ears. But although the suspense was fast becoming unbearable, he let no sign of his anxiety appear on his countenance. They had agreed early in the forenoon to keep the doors open until all creditors were satisfied. Now how he regretted that ill-judged decision! Already he saw himself close the wicket and announce suspension of payment. A few more large accounts, and the end would come!

There was a stir in the line, heads were laid together, and a suppressed buzz of excited whispering arose. Hope leaped up in the Vice-President's breast only to fall before a fearful despair, as his ear caught the words being passed up the line. "Special's met a washout at Oxford! Can't get through till night!"

The Vice-President's hand moved swiftly toward the window, paused, was drawn back. Perhaps, after all, it was but a rumor with no truth in it. And there still remained enough to meet another depositor or two. The depositor at the window saw the man's white, drawn face, and for an instant hesitated, then self-preservation overcame sympathy, and the Vice-President had his book.

"Hope you'll pull through all right," he ventured awkwardly. The Vice-President counted out twelve tens and some silver; he no longer asked how the creditor would have his money; there was no choice. He pushed the money through the window.

"No doubt about it!" he answered cheerfully.

Three hundred and eighty dollars and sixty-two cents was the amount of the next withdrawal. The Vice-President consoled himself for the size of it by reflecting that the sooner it was over and the doors closed, the sooner would the suspense and strain

cease. His watch showed the time to be a few minutes before the half hour. He had given up listening for the train whistle now; even if the train came in, the money could not reach them in time.

He counted out the money; four fifties — there seemed to be a stir in the line on the steps — five twenties — he could hear a noise down the street like the galloping of horses — four twenties in gold — there was a sound of shouting outside — fifty, sixty-two in silver; three hundred and eighty dollars and sixty-two cents; he pushed the money through the window — The man was gone! The line had dissolved! A tumult of cries came through the open door! He leaned against the ledge, breathless, exhausted, hoping against hope!

The galloping feet came near and stopped; a great shout of triumph dinned in his ears, and as the throng at the doorway parted to let pass Dick Upham weighted with two bulky canvas bags, the Vice-President fell noiselessly and unnoticed across the desk!

Following Upham came the expressman, similarly burdened. Three trips were made between the wagon and the vaults, and when the seven bags had been stowed away, with never a tell-tale jingle, behind the steel doors, another cry arose from the fickle crowd, and it turned away, and by ones, and twos, and half dozens went home to its dinner.

"But the special's stalled at Oxford by the washout!" objected a little fireman.

"Washout be blowed!" answered his engineer, as he took the suspicious mate by the arm. "There's the money; what more do you want?" And the little fireman didn't know, and so went home to dinner.

In the directors' room the Vice-President lay on the lounge and mopped his brow with his white silk handkerchief. Dick Upham sat on the big table and swung his legs and smoked. He had closed the bank doors and sent the remaining clerk off for his lunch, and now peace reigned again in the First National.

"Where's Gordon?" asked the Vice-President at last.

"Can't say," replied Upham.

"Well, what was that I heard about the train being stalled at Oxford?"

"Correct, as far as I can learn."

The Vice-President sat up and stared.

"Correct? Then how in thunder did he get the money here?"

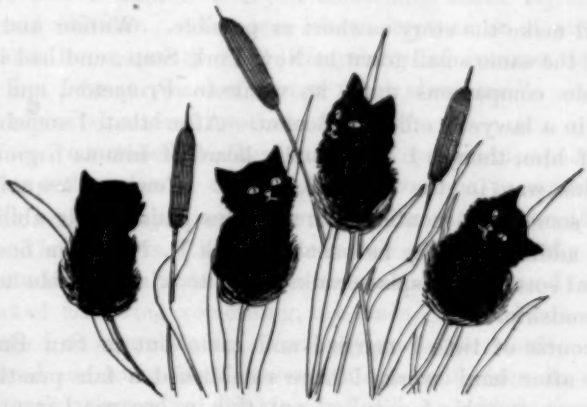
"He didn't."

There was silence for a minute, while the Vice-President gazed helplessly at the youth on the table. Then he sank back on the couch.

"Dick," he asked huskily, "what's in those bags?"

Upham blew a cloud of smoke into the air, and smiled through it gaily at the Vice-President.

"Roulette chips," said he, "from the Alhambra!"



My Friend, Walker.

BY GERALDINE MEYRICK.

IT was an innocent-looking note, but I shuddered as I read it; for it came to me as convincing evidence of the insanity of an old friend.

It read as follows: —

"SQUATTERS' RANCH,
"CATTON, KERN COUNTY.

"*Dear Cole:* — Have succeeded at last. Come down here if you want to hear some real good horse-sense. I think the conversation will prove interesting.

"Yours sincerely,
"GEO. WALKER."

I will make the story as short as possible. Walker and I were born in the same small town in New York State, and had been inseparable companions until he went to Princeton, and I was placed in a lawyer's office in Boston. After that, I somehow lost sight of him, though I occasionally heard of him as beginning to make his way in the scientific world. Common acquaintances would sometimes mention him; always praising his ability, but always adding: "Pity he's such a crank." Now, I'm one of the practical sort, and despise cranks; so I took no trouble to renew the friendship.

In course of time I married and came out to San Francisco, where, after hard work, I have established a fair practise, and raised a respectable family. I put this in, because I want you to understand, from the first, that I am an ordinary, level-headed sort of man, not easily imposed on; and, as I said before, possessing a natural aversion to cranks and their notions.

Well, one windy, foggy night, I was hurrying from my office to take a car home, when a hand was laid on my shoulder. Turning round, I came face to face with Walker. It was impossible to

mistake his peculiar features, in spite of the changes made by time. He looked shabby and rather dissipated, but seemed so heartily glad to see me that I felt quite touched, and after a few words of greeting, rashly asked him to come home and take dinner with me. I could have kicked myself the next minute, for somehow he didn't look just the sort of man to take into one's household. He evidently guessed my thoughts, for he looked down at his shabby boots with a faint smile; then said, quietly: —

"Thanks, old man; but I'm not exactly in order for dining out. Tell you what, though. Come in here and have a drink, and we can talk a few minutes, if you have the time to spare."

"In here" proved to be, not the gay saloon on one side of us, but a demure little bakery on the other. We went in, sat down at a little table in a dark corner, and were soon enjoying some fragrant coffee, ignoring the inevitable doughnuts which accompanied it.

"Well, a great many things have happened since we last met," I said, after a somewhat awkward silence.

"Yes; and I want to tell you something about my share of them," said Walker. "You see, I have kept track of you right along, and know pretty well everything of interest in your career; but I fancy you don't know much about me."

I felt reproved, and said nothing.

"In fact," continued Walker, fixing his eyes on his spoon as he stirred his coffee slowly, "in fact, there are some passages in my life which none of my friends know, or ever shall know, if I can help it. The truth is, I have made rather a failure of my life so far. I studied awfully hard for a time; then, just as I was on the point of achieving something, my brain got tired out, and — well, I tried to stimulate it. You may guess the result. Keely cure helped me some, but I haven't much confidence in myself now. That's why we're drinking coffee," he added, apologetically.

"What are you doing now?" I asked, rather at a loss what to say.

"Ranching, if you'll believe it. That is, I've rented a few acres down in Kern County."

"Do you find it pays?"

"No, not yet. But it will, some day. It will make me famous yet."

I looked at him searchingly. There undoubtedly was a curious gleam in his eyes. Was the man crazy? Or, equally unpleasant, was he hoping to borrow a few hundred dollars from me on the strength of his brilliant prospects as a farmer? I shook my head disparagingly. "Farmers don't seem very prosperous, as a rule," I said.

"Don't they? Really, I know very little about them. You see, I'm trying something a little out of the ordinary. It's an experiment, of course; but you will see that it succeeds. I haven't told a soul about it till now; but we were chums once, so I'll trust you with the secret. You will laugh over it now, I guess, but not in six months' time."

He leaned over the table towards me, and lowered his voice.

"You know that fellow, Garner, has been trying for a long while to understand the language of monkeys. Well, he's all right, of course, and he may do wonders yet; but I am going to get ahead of him. Monkeys *do* talk, no doubt, and he may learn something from them; but I'm tackling a more intelligent animal, the horse. Horses don't exactly talk, but they communicate with each other. They don't chatter and grimace; they are too intelligent for that. They are a decent, clean race, that a man may be proud to associate with. Now I have six horses down on my ranch; have been studying with them for a year past, and"—with a triumphant blow of his fist on the shaky little table,—"I have already mastered their language, or whatever you choose to call their medium of communication."

I looked at him in alarm. He noticed my expression, and laughed shortly.

"I see you think I'm a crank; but I am telling you the simple truth. Now, I'll tell you one thing more, and then you can go home. I am going to teach them to speak in *our* language; or, rather, to express themselves in such a way that any man can understand them. I have one nearly trained now. Will let you know when he is perfect. But mind, not a word of this to any one; not till it is a complete success."

With that, he jumped up, paid for the coffee, and disappeared.

I heard nothing of him for two months. Then came the note given above. I started for Kern County the day after receiving it, though not without feeling that I was running a serious risk. I really would not have gone, only it seemed mean not to go down and look after Walker, when his mania was evidently coming to a crisis.

Arrived at the little town of Catton, I inquired of the station-agent where Squatters' Ranch was. He looked me up and down curiously before he spoke.

"Where the crazy man lives, do you mean?"

"I mean where Mr. George Walker lives," I replied, with some asperity. No doubt Walker *was* crazy, but I did not like to have any man *I* was going to see spoken of in that way.

"Oh, well," said the agent, "I guess he's about as crazy as they make them. That's his house, right over there, with the big barn just back of it."

"Ah, yes! He raises horses, doesn't he?" I asked carelessly.

"Well, now, I don't know as he *raises* them. But he has half a dozen or so. And he makes as much fuss over them as if they were white elephants."

I picked up my valise, and prepared to walk the short distance from the depot to Walker's house, when the agent, after a particularly deliberate expectoration, beckoned me nearer with a side jerk of his head, and inquired in a confidential tone: —

"Say, do you know that man at all?"

"Yes, I know him well," I replied firmly.

"Well, now, look here. I wish you'd just tell me what he *is* trying to do with those horses. Some folks say he's training them for a circus?" Here he looked at me interrogatively, but I said nothing. He picked up a bit of wood and whittled it carefully, as he walked beside me to the end of the platform. "And there are others say he's crazy and ought to be sent to Stockton. But I reckon he's harmless; he hasn't hurt anybody yet, anyway. Well, so long. Guess you ain't much of a talker. No matter; so long."

"So long," I said, and continued on my way with an anxious heart. "*He hasn't hurt anybody yet.*" What a nasty way to put it.

The house pointed out was a low, whitewashed cottage close to the road, while the big barn lay some fifty feet back of it. The premises looked to be in good order, without anything extraordinary about them, unless it was that they were a little neater than is usual around a farmhouse. I crossed the little garden in front and knocked at the narrow door. It was opened at once, and Walker, grasping me by the hand, literally pulled me into the little parlor. He was looking positively youthful; his clothes were spruce, and there was a festive air about him generally.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, after helping me off with my overcoat. "I half feared you wouldn't come. Now, didn't you think I was fooling you? Or crazy?"

"Oh, I came as soon as I could possibly get away," I answered evasively.

"Now sit down and rest yourself, and we'll have a cup of tea. Sorry I haven't any wine to offer you, but — well, I don't keep any in the house. Discretion is the better, etc."

As he talked, Walker busied himself in lighting a little lamp, filling the kettle, and bringing out cups. It was a fine day in winter, just cool enough to make the hot drink by the fire very welcome, and somehow I enjoyed myself in spite of my anxiety. Besides, Walker talked for some time on very commonplace subjects, in a very commonplace manner, till I began to hope I had been wrong in doubting his sanity. As I put down my cup for the second time, he rose, and said: —

"Now we'll go out to the barn and I'll introduce you to the Prince of Darkness.

"Don't look scared. It's only the name I have given my favorite horse."

He led the way through the house, out of the back door, and across the yard, while I followed reluctantly. I noticed that there were no houses within call; and there was an oppressive lack of the life which usually surrounds a house in the country. Some horses were grazing in a field near by, and a big dog was sunning himself near the barn; but they were silent, and there was no cheerful cackling of hens or grunting of pigs.

At the barn door Walker stopped, and turned on me almost fiercely.

"Look here," he said. "I don't really know you very well now, but we were chums once, and so I trust you. But I want your solemn promise that you will not reveal the manner in which the Prince communicates with you. You are quite at liberty to repeat what he says, but the way in which he says it is my discovery, and I prefer to give it to the world myself. Do you promise?"

"I do."

"Then come along."

The barn was a large, rambling old place, but we went at once into a roomy box-stall, in which stood a handsome black horse, stamping impatiently. There was a comfortably natural smell of hay and dust; but as I looked into the eyes of the Prince of Darkness, I thought I detected in them a too intelligent gleam, and half expected him to address me in some uncanny voice.

Being utterly ignorant of scientific subjects and scientific terms, it is doubtful if I could rightly explain the manner of the Prince's communication, even if I felt at liberty to do so, which is far from being the case. Some of my friends insist that I was hypnotized; that the thoughts which I believed to emanate from the horse were impressed on me by Walker; but I would remind you that I am strong-minded and not easily impressed. However, I will not attempt to explain *how* we communicated our thoughts. Suffice it to say that we *did* communicate them; and so interested did I become that I was surprised when the increasing darkness warned us that the short winter day was nearly ended.

At first there was merely an interchange of polite phrases between us. The Prince was kind enough to say that he was delighted to meet me, and I expressed my pleasure at being enabled to understand the views and opinions of a member of the equine race. These preliminaries over, we talked for some time on various subjects; but, somewhat to my surprise, I found that the Prince had no strikingly original opinions. At last I ventured to ask him whether he did not find great pleasure in his new accomplishment. In a minute his aspect changed. He threw up his head with a sharp cry, and stamped violently. Then, hanging his head, as if ashamed, he expressed himself as willing to bear much misery for his master's sake.

I was naturally somewhat alarmed by his sudden outburst, but Walker appeared to be completely upset by it. He turned white to the lips, and shook visibly. After a few moments of silence, he went up to the horse, and flinging one arm lovingly over the glossy neck, exclaimed: —

"Poor old fellow!" Why, why didn't you tell me it pained you?"

The Prince of Darkness shook his head mournfully.

"I can bear it, I can bear it," he said. "But oh, it is terrible to have thoughts! Before you taught me your words I never thought, I could only feel. But now! It is terrible. Thought after thought rushing through my brain, and never a moment's rest; for every thought suggests another, and there is no end to them. The agony is fearful at times. But it must be borne now, so don't worry about me. I suppose you suffer in the same way yourself, only you are accustomed to it."

Still with his face white and set, Walker filled the manger with fresh hay, stroked the Prince's velvety nose, and went out of the barn, actually tottering in his walk. I followed slowly, quite at a loss what to do, even what to think of it all. I was no longer ready to pronounce Walker crazy; he had actually accomplished the marvelous feat he had undertaken. All the same, I was far from happy about him. When I came out of the barn he was not in sight. I hurried to the house, and found him in the parlor, lying full length on the floor, and sobbing as if his heart would break.

"Come, come, Walker," I said. "Cheer up. You have achieved a wonderful success."

He sat up, stared at me, then laughed bitterly.

"Success? Yes. But at what a price. Just conceive the misery that poor brute has undergone; and I never once thought of it. And now I cannot undo my work. I know what he suffers. I know how his head aches and his brain throbs, while he tries to rest and cannot. O Prince, Prince! That I should have put you in such torment!"

So he went on, till nearly midnight. It was heart-rending to hear his self-reproaches. I tried to comfort him by saying that the horse would get over his mental troubles in time, as soon as

he acquired full mental strength. Doubtless his education had been advanced too rapidly, and a little care would soon make him all right. But Walker would not be comforted; time had increased his own mental troubles, and it would be the same with the Prince. At last, when I saw that he was too exhausted to offer much resistance, I ordered him to go to bed, assuring him that in the morning we would be able to devise some way of relieving the horse. In my own mind I thought it would really be best to kill the poor animal, but I did not venture to suggest it then. Walker had worked so hard for his success, and the result was so marvelous, that it seemed wicked to throw it all away; yet I shuddered when I recalled the agonized eyes of the Prince.

Walker insisted on my taking his bed, saying that he would sleep well enough on the sofa by the fire. I went into his room, but left the door open, and kept a close watch over him until he went into a heavy sleep, when, I suppose, I soon followed his example.

The next thing I remember is waking up suddenly and fancying I heard a terrible stamping and whinnying, and then the report of a pistol, followed immediately by a second shot. All was quiet again before I was thoroughly awake. I sat up and listened carefully. No, there was no sound, except heavy, regular breathing in the next room. The fire and lamp had both gone out, and I could not see Walker; but he must be having a splendid sleep, the best possible medicine for his nerves. Having decided that the noises I had heard must have been mere echoes from the land of dreams, I soon fell asleep again.

I did not wake again until the sunlight fell on my face through the blindless window. I jumped out of bed and looked into the next room. Walker was not there; but lying in front of the fireplace was a large dog asleep. As I listened to his heavy, regular breathing, a horrible fear came over me. Hastily putting on my things, I rushed out of the house and over to the barn. The door was open. My heart beat like a hammer. I stopped a moment to gather strength, and listened. There were no sounds. I went in. There was the same comforting smell of hay and dust. I passed one or two stalls where horses were contentedly munching.

A cat jumped down from a loft and rubbed against my legs, purring. There were no other sounds. Somehow, I could not raise my voice to call for Walker, though I would have given anything to hear him answer me.

I opened the door of the box where I had talked with the Prince of Darkness. They were both lying there, side by side, dead. A pistol was still held in Walker's stiffened grasp. The eyes of the Prince of Darkness were closed, and his expression was one of almost human peace.

In An Hour.

BY WARWICK JAMES PRICE.

THE clock in the chapel tower struck five. An Upper Schooler, on his way to the racquet court, looked up, smiling, congratulating himself on his freedom from study hours, and wondering how long the October sun would allow play. It was yet well above the trees; if he hurried, he might have an hour.

The sunshine flooded the little landscape with that mellow radiance it squanders only in the first most glorious days of Indian summer. It flamed along the hills in purple, and crimson, and gold; it painted a more brilliant green the long, sloping sward about the chapel, and then, climbing up the great dormitory, filled the Under-Master's room with warmth and cheerfulness.

The Under-Master looked up from his sick-bed and for a long minute gazed thoughtfully out into the great blue vault, scarcely broken by a few thin, motionless cloud arabesques. It seemed so infinitely far away — and yet so terribly near. Then he came back again to the page in his hand: —

"It isn't what one *hasn't got*
That ought to quench the light of life.
It's what one *loses*, is it not?
It's death, or treason in a wife;
It's finding one's unhappy lot.

. . . . . .

"From what you haven't gaily turn
To what you have; the world's alive.
Still pulses beat, still passions burn;
There's still to work, there's still to strive;
The cure is easy to discern.

. . . . . .

"So don't be gloomy, don't be glum,

Nor give a thought to what you lack;
Take what you have, no longer dumb
Nor idle, hit misfortune back,
And own that I have reason; come!"

Again the invalid's eyes wandered out into the narrow glimpse of God's good world that his little window gave. "Good advice, Mr. Stephen, and I've tried to follow it; but I guess it's just a trifle late now. I don't think I've been 'glum' very often — and no one has known it when I have been. I don't believe I've often dwelt on all I hadn't. And I do think I've hit as often and as hard at Milady Misfortune as I could. But she's won at last." Then he added, "Perhaps she hasn't, but it's hard, hard not to believe so."

Absent-mindedly he closed the book and lay looking at it. It was a thin little volume of verse by a Cambridge man. "*Quo Musa Tendis*," he read on the little signboard title.

"I hope the muse has traveled pleasanter roads for Stephen than for me. I'd be thankful if even so small a book as this might carry my name on, though for only one short generation."

There was a water-color painted on the cover, a sea-view done in dark blue on the light cloth ground. He remembered so plainly the afternoon when that had been done. It was the mother's work, and he had been sitting by, writing. It was August, and the dusty roads and fields made the shaded room acceptable. He had found vacation work up among the foot-hills, and she had come to the little farmhouse to be near him. There had been worries for both, but now he only recalled the deep pleasures of that loving companionship, and wondered if he had half appreciated it.

He put down the book and lay back upon his pillow, but with wide eyes and the sick brain so busy. Nothing about him but had some story to tell, some scene to repaint for him. Nor would one have guessed the young master's empty pocket from seeing the room. But the pretty furniture and the rugs, with all their warmth of color, had been in the old home before the father's failure; the pictures were the accumulation of college years, when a generous allowance was a monthly surety; the books — he had

always bought books, from the days of the worn and loved "Boys of '76" to that latest and handsomest "Anacreon" of Bullen's. Perhaps it was his extravagance; if so, it was his only one, and in the long separation from all those he most loved, he had these true friends at least always by him.

The sun fell aslant the long shelves opposite him. It almost seemed the books were smiling, so cheerfully did the gildings glance back his light. There was dear old "Elia," two volumes of him, in gray boards as prim as his own Quaker folk, and type as clear as his own laugh. The invalid had found him in a Broadway basement shop during one of those flying trips down from Yale. "Cheap at seven dollars!" and the hotel bill was sent after him to New Haven. And there was the Bachelor with his Reveries beside a sea-coal fire. His life had had sadness in it, too, but now he only suggested those long, lazy afternoons on the lake, the little boat drifting on into the sunset, and just those two, Bachelor and student, aboard. That delightful dreamer of "Prue and I" was there, the old bookkeeper in the white cravat, with Prue sweetly smiling on one arm, and Aurelia proudly glancing on the other; and Adam Moss, his Kentucky cousin, with a little basket of heart-shaped strawberries. Both had much to say of those all too short rainy afternoons, and cups of Her fragrant tea, and the cozy, confidential chats between chapters. There, too, was sweet little Lorna Doone, and Kipling galloping through the memory like one of his own East Indian troopers. ("Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the border-side," hummed the invalid.) Bret Harte, Moliere, Keats, Eugene Field, Shelley, Austin Dobson, an odd companionship, but all dear, he could see them all, and he tried to get up, to go out and handle them once more. But he was too weak, and fell back on the pillow again with a little sigh.

Motionless, with closed eyes, he lay there while the sun moved across the shelves, across the etching of Fortuny's Death-bed, and left the room in twilight. Then the sick man turned to the table by him, and taking up the paper began to write: —

"*Dearest Mother:*— This is my good-by. I had prayed I might not have to write it, perhaps not even say it — yet. But it has

seemed best otherwise. It's hard throwing down one's work at twenty-six, and it just beginning to show. But that, too, is best somehow, and now there's one less to think of and plan for, if one less to love.

"O dearest, dearest Mother, I had dreamed it all so differently. The mine was to prove the lucky, making stroke. The Dad and thee, dear, were to have your home once more, and I was to be with you — and perhaps (I prayed) a fourth. I had even imagined that home; the long lawn, the water at its foot, a great west-looking library, and the sweetest little bay-windowed room upstairs for Her. And dear Daddy was to have his newspapers three times a day, and a horse as good as the Duke — perhaps even the Duke himself — for those early morning rides, and I once more astride of Punch. And up in the studio thee was to paint just for us. I was to write something worth the name. There was to be music again in the house, and home-love everywhere.

"But now I've got to give it all up — give everything up — and remain forever just a young school-teacher who tried and failed. It's a pretty insignificant tragedy, after all.

"But to thee, dearest, I must ever be thy loving boy. Still the boy, dear, remember me so, as in those sweet, dim days before trouble came, and while I was yet young enough to climb into thy lap.

"I *am* only a boy. A man would be braver, and not cry out. But it is so, *so* hard. Hopes, plans, work, waiting — now, nothing.

"Dearest, I love thee so; if thee only knew! And I've tried to grow more worthy of the great love thee has given me. Well, I'll know soon how well or ill I have succeeded. God bless thee! God bless thee! Remember I love thee so truly and fondly! Good-by. I do love thee so! BEN."

"Give this book to Kate, and the note."

This was folded and addressed with a name. Then on another sheet: —

"*Dear Kate:* — May I write you one more note? You've always been so sweet and interested in my work and striving, and you've let me write just when I wanted to and as I felt. You

can never know now how much good that has done me; how much courage and hope you've led me to. But it's all so, and though it's all come to nothing at the last, yet I want to write you just once more and thank you, and tell you how I love you.

"It can't be but that you have guessed it; it is no new thing. Perhaps I should have told you before, but my pride slipped in a score of times and dragged me back. 'You're poor yet, and in debt. Keep quiet a while longer.' Once I thought it was all coming right. It really did seem that I had at last reached the crest of the long, long climb. I could almost see the broad-stretching land of peace and love spreading away at my feet. But the crest proved scarce a resting-place, and I had to start the climb again. Now I've no time to win that crest with all its dearest reward. I must drop out to the side,— thanking God, I suppose, that, tired as I am, I am not mud-stained, — and say good-by.

"I should not have written this, perhaps, but I did so want to. I hated to feel that you might never *know* the true, deep, pure love that has so long been all your own; that would have found its highest happiness in a lifetime's service of devotion,— and that now merely comes with my good-by.

"Remember me sometimes. Forgive this note. And once more, dear, good-by. BEN."

The sick man lay back on his pillow and again closed his eyes. The clock in the chapel tower struck six. The sun dropped below the hills. The Upper Schooler came out of the racquet court. "It was a pretty-well-played game," he said to his comrade. "If the light had lasted just a little while longer, I should have won."